COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM (AS BROADCAST)

THE CASE OF THE FLYING SAUCER

FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 1950

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CUE: (COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM)
(.........30 seconds.........)

MURROW: This is Edward R. Murrow. We're going to talk about Flying Saucers. We're going to talk about them from the standpoint of reporters...not as comedians...not as sensationalists.

For the past three years, a large number of perfectly saneand reliable people have been involved in this Flying Saucer business. Even those of us who have never seen one have become involved. We read about them...talk about them...wonder about these reports of strange phenomena in the skies.

So, almost from the start, CBS has been following the story. We have been collecting material on Flying Saucer observations for many months... checking, cross-checking, trying to track down leads no matter how far afield they took us.

This, tonight, is our report...

We frankly admit that we don't know whether Flying Saucers actually exist. We've never seen one but we are going to bring you the facts at hand...what they add up to...well, that's for you to decide... that's up to you.

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(MORE)

MURROW: (CTD)

It all began just a little less than three full years ago. It began in the sky over western Washington...up there in the hip-pocket of the country.

Early one June morning in 1947 a C-46 Marine Transport...with 32 Marines aboard...crashed in the vicinity of Mt. Ranier. An air-search was immediately organized to locate the downed plane. Among the many service and private flyers who participated in this search was Mr. Kenneth Arnold, a businessman of Boise, Idaho...a veteran pilot in forest fire control work... a man with six years experience flying over the terrain in and around Mount Ranier.

Yesterday morning we spoke to Mr. Arnold over the phone. We asked him to repeat for us...in his own words...what he saw in the sky over Mount Ranier on June 24, 1947. We recorded what he said...and we're going to play it for you now. The slight "beep" that you will hear intermittently is required to let both parties of a phone conversation know that they are being recorded. Here, now, is Mr. Kenneth Arnold...

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TAPE CUE #1: ARNOLD: It was while I was searching for this crash that I noticed a terrific blue flash go past thru my airplane. I noticed that the flash came from very peculiar looking objects that were rapidly approaching Mt. Ranier at about 107 degrees.. This train of objects were 9 in number. I assumed at the time they were a new formation or a new type of jets, so I was baffled by the fact that they did not have any tails, passed almost directly in front of me, but at a distance of about 23 miles which is not very great in the air. I judged their wing span to be at least 100 feet across. Their sighting did not particularly disturb me at the time except that I had never seen planes of that type.

(1.01)

MURROW: Mr. Arnold, after landing, made a routine report of what he had seen to a Civil Aeronautics Administration representative...promptly forgot the matter...until the wheels of publicity began to turn...the floodgates opened.....

TAPE CUE #2: ARNOLD: I never could understand at that time why the world got so upset about flying disks as these things didn't seem to be a menace. I believed that they had something to do with our Army and Air Force.

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MURROW: On three different occasions, Mr. Arnold was questioned by military intelligence. They expressed doubt as to the accuracy of some of his reported observations....

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TAPE CUE #3 ARNOLD: That's right. Now, of course, some of the reports they did take from newspapers which did not quote me properly. Now, when I told the press, they misquoted me and in the excitement of it all one newspaper and another one got it so ensnarled up that nobody exactly knew what they were talking about, I guess.

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MURROW: Here's how the name "Flying Saucer" was born....

TAPE CUE #4 ARNOLD: The objects more or less fluttered like they were oh I'd say boats on very rough water or a very rough air of some type and when I described how they flew I said they flew like you took a saucer and threw it across the water. Most of the newspapers misunderstood and misquoted that too. They said that I said they were saucer-like. I said they flew in a saucer-like fashion.

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MURROW: That was an historic misquote. While Mr. Arnold's original explanation has been forgotten, the term "Flying Saucer" has become a household word. Now, few people realize that Mr. Arnold has reported seeing these same strange objects in the sky on three other occasions...he says that some pilots in the northwest have reported seeing them on eight separate occasions. We asked for his own, personal opinion on the nature of what he...and the others... had seen...

TAPE CUE #5 ARNOLD: I don't know how best to explain that. I more or less have reserved an opinion as to what I think. Naturally, being a natural-born American if it's not made by our science or our Army Air Forces I'm inclined to believe that it's of extra-terrestrial origin.

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MURROW: Extra-terrestrial origin? You mean you think there's a possibility they may be coming out of space...from other planets. I suppose that's pretty hard for people to take seriously...

TAPE CUE #6

ARNOLD: Well, I'll tell you this much. All the airline pilots, none of us have appreciated being laughed at. We made our reports essentially to begin with because we thought that if our government didn't know what it was, it was only our duty to report it to our nation and to our Air Forces. I think it's something that is of concern to every person in the country. And I don't think there's anything for people to get hysterical about. Now, that's just my frank opinion of it.
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MURROW: So that's how it all began. That was the trigger-action. Kenneth Arnold's story went scudding over the news-wires...radio and newspapers picked it up and then...within days...the country broke out into a flood of "flying saucer" observations. Many of these reports...a great many of them..obviously could be discounted. Others... reports from perfectly competent, sober and reliable observers.. found no easy answer. In the face of this...late in 1947...the Chief of Staff of the Air Forces...at that time Gen. Carl Spaatz... sent a directive to the Air Material Command located at Wright Field, Ohio.

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VOICE: The Air Material Command is directed to set up a project whose purpose is to collect, collate, evaluate and distribute to interested government agencies and contractors all pertinent information concerning sightings of phenomena in the atmosphere which can be construed to be of concern to the national security.

MURROW: So was born "Project Saucer". Immediately the Air Material Command went to work. A team of experts was called in...astronomers...meteorologists...physicists...psychologists...electronics engineers...anyone who might have any special knowledge that could shed some light on this mystery. These specialists, along with a corps of trained investigators, tracked down every report of a"flying saucer" they could find. Each person making the report was questioned in detail...the findings were carefully screened by the entire project personnel...and, finally, each and every report was evaluated in a detailed study...two volumes thick...entitled:

VOICE: REPORT ON UNIDENTIFIED AERIAL AND CELESTIAL OBJECTS.

MURROW: For two years this report was "top secret"...but, on December 30, 1949, it was "declassified"...and tonight...for the first time on the air...we will bring you actual portions of this report...evaluations, summaries and conclusions.

Here, for instance...is a typical case...

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VOICE: (SLIGHTLY COVERING MURROW) 8 July 1947...0930 hours local, Muroc Air Force Base. Four witnesses, all observed two silver disc-like spherical objects against a clear bright sky. All witnesses estimated the altitude at about 8,000 feet, and the speed between 300 and 400 miles per hour...

MURROW: (INTERJECTING) Remember...these were trained observers...Air Force men...

VOICE: (CONTINUING) The objects reportedly traveled in a straight line. Taking the mean reported speed... 350 miles per hour...and the time in sight (one half-hour)...the objects must then have traveled 175 miles while in sight. If the objects were of such proportions as to be seen at that distance, it is believed that more details could have been observed at the first sighting.

MURROW: The Air Material Command opinion on the Muroc Air Base sightings was this:

VOICE 2: This report is a result of misinterpretation of the nature of real stimuli...probably research balloons.

MURROW: Another report;

On January 7, 1948, Tech. Sgt. Quinton A. Blackwell, chief operator of the control tower at Godman Field, an Air Force Base at Fort Knox, Kentucky, spotted a strange object hovering over the south portion of the field.

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MURROW: (CTD) In a matter of minutes, a flight of four P-51 fighter planes approaching the field were contacted by radio and asked to chase the object. Leader of the flight was Captain Thomas F. Mantell, Jr., veteran of the Normandy invasion, with some 3,000 flying hours to his credit. At 2:45, Mantell reported by radio:

MANTELL: (SLIGHT FILTER) Object directly ahead and above and moving about half my speed. Going up to take a look.

MURROW: At 3:15 Mantell reported again:

MANTELL: Object still ahead and above ...moving at about my speed or faster...360 miles per hour. The thing looks metallic and is of tremendous size. I'm trying to close in for a b etter look.

MURROW: By now, Mantell and his flight were at about 15,000 feet. They had no oxygen equipment. At 18,000 feet the escorting planes turned back...but Mantell kept climbing... His next report came from 20,000 feet...

MANTELL: (OBVIOUSLY IN NEED OF OXYGEN) Going to 25,000...if no closer, will abandon search...

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MURROW: That was the last report from Captain Thomas Mantell. At approximately 25,000 feet it is believed he blacked out. His plane climbed another 5,000 feet...then went into a dive. When it crashed, parts of it were scattered around an area covering one-sixth of a mile.

Project Saucer conclusion:

VOICE 1: It seems probable that the object observed was the planet Venus.

MURROW: Later...in a report dated April 27, 1949, this conclusion was reversed. Further investigation showed the elevation and azimuth readings of Venus and the object as reported at specified time intervals just didn't jibe. The object Captain Mantell chased to his tragic death is now officially marked:

VOICE: Unidentified.

MURROW: In all, Project Saucer investigated 375 cases. The report takes in 244 different observations. Just yesterday we asked Major General William F. McKee, Assistant Vice Chief of Staff, United States Air Forces to summarize the conclusions reached by Project Saucer. He said....

April 6

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TAPE CUE #7

MC KEE: During two years of thorough investigation, no evidence was found which would indicate that the reported flying saucers were anything but the result of natural phenomena. On the other hand, all the evidence indicated that the reports of unidentified flying objects could be accounted for under three major headings. One, misinterpretation of various conventional objects; two, a mild form of hysteria; three, or simple hoaxes. It had been suggested that what people actually had been seeing is is the result of some of our own secret experiments, guided missiles or new types of planes or flying weapons. This is emphatically not the case. None of the three military departments nor any other agency in government is conducting experiments, classified or otherwise, with disc-shaped flying objects which could be a basis for the reported phenomena.

MURROW: On December 27, 1949, Project Saucer went out of existence. The Flying Saucers, however, refused to follow the Project into limbo. Just possibly one of the reasons behind the stubbornness of the saucers to accept the mantle of oblivion was an article that appeared in True Magazine just about the time Project Saucer was abandoned. It had previously been shown pretty conclusively that the number of sighting reports over a period of months usually followed closely the amount of publicity given to flying saucer observations. A lot of stories, a lot of sightings. Few stories, few sightings. Psychologists call this mass suggestion.

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MURROW: (CTD) But to return to the True Magazine article printed in December of 1949...some percentage of the new wave of Flying Saucer reports can certainly be chalked off to mass suggestion. But...again...as in the first reports...there remained that same unexplainable percentage of reliable, trained observers who claimed to have seen some object...or objects...wheeling, whirling, zooming, slicing or hovering in the sky. Douglas Ghourley of Laguna Beach, California is an example. Here's his story:

TAPE CUE #8

GHOURLEY: I served 14 months as an anti-aircraft observer and also 18 months as a seacoast observer with other searchlight batteries. I was driving north on March 21st on 101 Highway at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon when my attention was distracted by the sunlight reflecting off some objects. I counted 8 of them headed directly out to sea at 2,000 feet altitude...they gave the appearance of being made out of aluminum and I could observe a perfect circle outline of these craft. They were going, I would say, approximately 150 miles per hour, They were definitely a powered-craft of some sort.

MURROW: Here's a report from Selma, Alabama;

Selma, Alabama

MRS. NUTT: We were riding along the open country and had been observing a very beautiful sunset and as the sun dipped over the western horizon I looked to my right and there in the sky were three small lights which to me appeared to be 3 very small clouds. I looked steadily and I said, they're not clouds, they're airplanes.

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MRS. NUTT: (CTD) Then I called my husband's attention to it and he said, No, those are not airplanes, they're lights. And we observed them very closely but being in motion ourselves to us they were motionless, because we didn't stop but as we rode along for something over a mile they hung there in the sky and they were-to-us--had the appearance of tubes of fluorescent light, of beautiful, silvery, pink tinged moonlight. And I said to my husband, that gives a feeling that God is trying to say something to us and we have had that feeling within us since.

MURROW: By mid-March of this year, the flood of Flying Saucer sightings had hit a new peak. Into many of these reports there now crept a new and somewhat eerie tone...the feeling that these Flying Saucers were something "out of this world", possibly interplanetary aircraft sent from some distant celestial sphere to investigate what manner of life managed to exist on old Mother Earth. In line with this, we went to Dr. Donald Menzel, Professor of Astrophysics at Harvard University and Associate Director of the famous Harvard Observatory to find out just how feasible any such idea might be. Dr. Menzel has this to say:

TAPE CUE #9

MENZEL: Well, I suppose anything is possible. But I consider it extremely unlikely.

MURROW: Well, what could these flying bodies actually be, Dr. Menzel?

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TAPE CUE #10 MENZEL: Sun shining from a very distant plane, shining so that you can see that there was an object there, but the plane so far away that you couldn't hear it. Weather balloons. You have the bright round patch at a fairly high altitude. Sometimes there are four of them attached together. And then again, just pieces of paper carried aloft. When it gets off to two or three hundred feet you can't tell whether it's a hundred, a thousand or ten thousand feet.

MURROW: Prior to the middle of March, most observations... certainly all those which could be credited to reliable sources...stated that the object seen was a good distance away...a distance that ranged from a few miles to ten and twenty. But... on March 16th ... a physician, a man who holds a private pilot's license...reported that he had seen some strange, unidentifiable type of flying body at close range. Dr. Craig Hunter of Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, had this experience...

TAPE CUE #12 HUNTER: I was going north on Route 153 from Clearfield, Pa., toward Pennfield, Pa. And about 9 miles out of Clearfield, I begin to hear a hissing, whistling sort of sound, something that I -- that was completely strange to me. And then I looked up into the sky and coming from a south-easterly direction to a northwesterly direction was this flying disc or for the want of a better name, a flying saucer. It was, I would say, about 150 feet around in circumference, and there were 3 distinct parts of it.

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HUNTER: (CTD) There was an inner circle, a middle circle which rotated around this inner circle and an outside circle which on about 1/3 of the area on each side was covered with openings somewhat similar to an airliner opening. Now, this inner circle rotated anti-clockwise very slowly and it went over me, practically right over my head and I would say it was traveling at a speed approximately 60 to 70 miles an hour. I would say that the thing was approximately 250 to 350 feet above me -- not over 400 feet. It was of a dirty aluminum color. I got a tendency to indicate the southern edge as sloping up, which would indicate to me that it was about 15 to 20 feet thick at the center. It would give you the idea that it was a rocket type of combustion rather. It didn't give you the indication of a make and break like a motor or anything like that. It was a continuous hissing, whistling sound. Conditions were very, very fine for observing. It was just as clear as a bell and I could distinctly see each and every detail, as to the outline of it.

MURROW: In order to check the whole question of design...to find out whether or not a saucer-like object such as the one described by Dr. Hunter could maintain itself in flight according to the basic laws of aerodynamics, we called for the opinion of one of the nation's outstanding aeronautical engineers. Hall Hibbard is Vice-President and Chief Engineer of Lockheed Aircraft and here is what he has to say over the "beep" recording telephone...

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TAPE CUE #14 HIBBARD: My feeling is that it is possible to build and fly something that looks like a saucer, just from the technical standpoint. But I do not believe that there is such a thing at this time. I do not know of anything that would fit in that category. I'm very familiar with pretty much what's going on in the way of research and developments and I know of nothing that would be considered as flying saucers or flying saucer material. You can make something that looks like a saucer fly, if anybody'd want to, but I do not believe it would be possible with our present knowledge to have them make the speed and everything that everyone has been talking about.

MURROW: The Flying Saucers story came back into sharp focus on Monday of the present week. On that day the United States News and World Report, a national news magazine, and Henry J. Taylor, a radio commentator, both came out with flat statements that Flying Saucers actually exist. Mr. Taylor said that there are two or more different objects that have been sighted and labelled "Flying Saucers". One of these objects...the true "Flying Saucer", according to Mr. Taylor, is a missile, round in shape, varying in size from 20 inches to 250 feet in diameter...some are guided, others are not. The U. S. News and World Report article mentions nothing about these objects.

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MURROW: (CTD) The magazine, however, describes a jet-propelled aircraft of revolutionary design that agrees, in some details, with Mr. Taylor's second secret craft...a piloted plane capable of high speeds and high maneouverability. Both accounts agree that the present models stem directly from the XF5-U1... the so-called "Flying Pancake"...a small edition of which was built and flown in 1942. Last night we put a special recording line into the home of Mr. Charles H. Zimmerman, the man who originally designed the XF5-U1. We asked him about the plane.. whether it ever actually flew...

TAPE CUE #16 ZIMMERMAN: This aircraft never flew. The official designation of the aircraft was the XF5U1, which was to be a high performance Navy fighter. However, a low-powered lightly-loaded version of this craft called the V173 made a large number of successful flights. I conceived the original idea for this craft back in 1933.

MURROW: As a top plane designer, we asked Mr. Zimmerman to give us his opinion as to whether or not a plane could be built that could hover like a helicopter.. then take off at almost supersonic speeds. He said:

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TAPE CUE #17 ZIMMERMAN: It would be possible using modern turbine prope engines to build a machine of this type which would be capable of hovering and flying at all forward speeds up to possibly 550 or 600 miles per hour.

MURROW: To follow through on the problem of whether or not disc-shaped objects could actually fly, we got in touch with Mr. David C. Prince, Vice President of the General Electric Company and chief of its General Engineering and Consulting Laboratory. Mr. Prince was having no part of Flying Saucers....

TAPE CUE #19 PRINCE: My thought is simply that the ability of some people to kid themselves is extraordinary. For instance, the effect of searchlights on clouds has been taken to be flying discs. Even radar evidence is not conclusive here becaıse rain in the clouds would show up on a radar screen. The only saucer-shaped aircraft which we know has flown, and that only a few times, is a propeller powered disc developed by NACA. As a matter of fact, a cigar-shaped craft with a single revolving wing-- jet powered -- could be much faster and certainly would be more maneuverable. In flight, this plane might look like a disc because of the halo created by its rapidly revolving wing. Such a craft would have flight characteristics similar to a humming bird's.

MURROW: Late this afternoon we tried to tote up the score... On one desk we had a pile of clippings, news reports, recordings of eye witness accounts of Flying Saucer observations. We had the Taylor broadcast...the U.S. News and World Report article.

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MURROW: (CTD)

On another desk, we had our "Project Saucer" report ... the transcripts of our conversations with leading scientists and engineers, who, to use a gentle phrase, discounted the possibility of any such thing as a Flying Saucer. On that desk, too, was the news ticker dispatch from the United States Submarine Base at Key West, Florida, that quoted President Truman's Press Secretary, Charles Ross, as saying, that President Truman has no knowledge of any secret project by this government that would give substance to the existence of such objects. Ross also said that both the Air Force and the Navy deny that such objects exist.

We tried to add it up...

We admit that now...as before we started our case... we have no opinion...the figures just don't add up. So we went to the public...we went to the man and the woman on the street to see how they were reacting to this barrage of positive sightings and just as positive denials...We wondered how they felt. They told us:

TAPE CUE #20

MONTAGE:

Well, I think there's more to it than meets the eye. I think there's more to it than what they're writing about. Personally, I don't think such things exist. Well, I don't see how it could..I've a confidence that something on that order may exist...I lived in N.C. in 1903 when the reporter from the N.Y. World was fired for reporting that the Wright Brothers flew.

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MONTAGE: (CTD) Some say they're stars, some say they're enemy action and all kinds of things-- well, I really don't know.

There must be something to it. Purely imagination.

I didn't believe it at first, but now I'm beginning to believe it. No such thing as a flying saucer. Well, I believe President Truman like the rest of us has the right to his opinion.

MURROW: And now, just in case all this has added to the celestial confusion about your heads, we've summarized the data we've been able to gather -- sorted out the points of agreement and disagreement among those who claim to have seen flying saucers. Here's what we found...Nearly all these observers are in agreement on the color of the objects... it's a metallic color, they say, something like aluminum or silver. Almost everybody agrees the objects are generally disc-shaped, but with variations, balloon-like or resembling a giant rubber ball, Still others describe them as elongated, cigar-shaped things. Speed of the saucers has been estimated at from zero to 1200 miles an hour and when we get into the question of maneuverability the observers seem not to be able to find the precise or adequate words. They say that the saucers hover, accelerate and decelerate rapidly; that some of the objects flutter, oscillate, drift, whirl or float.

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MURROW: There seems to be no fixed pattern of flight in cases where more than one or two discs have been reported but several persons have said that in group flights one of the discs seemed to be of a distinct color, indicating possibly, that this off-colored disc was the monitor or control disc. A small percentage of the observers said the discs bore lights and in five cases, at points as far apart as Alabama and California, the viewers said the discs suddenly disappeared in flight. But when we get around to estimating altitudes at which the objects were sighted, we find that some observers saw them at 250 feet and others guessed the discs were 40,000 feet in the sky. While one observer put the number of discs seen at 100, nearly all thought the number was less than ten and about half those who claim to have seen the objects said they saw only single saucers.

These are the things men and women in various parts of the United States say they've seen. Men of science and high government officials cast a skeptical eye at these reported sightings of celestial phenomenon. Frankly, we don't know the answer.

Do YOU believe in flying saucers?

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ANNCR: You have been listening to THE CASE OF THE FLYING SAUCER, a special report narrated by Edward R. Murrow. THE CASE OF THE FLYING SAUCER was based on extensive research collected with the aid of CBS affiliated stations and CBS newsmen across the country. Portions of this broadcast were transcribed. This program was written by Irve Tunick, directed by John Dietz and produced by Robert Bendick and Irving Gitlin. Mr. Murrow appeared on this program through the courtesy of the makers of Franco-American Spaghetti.

This is CBS...THE COLUMBIA BROADCASTING SYSTEM.

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